3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

in return. Even a slave used to have rights of appeal to the king if he were starved and beaten without cause. The king was the prime mover in warfare. The whole legal system is at this time directly under Portuguese administration though the kings and chiefs have minor powers. Ngonga says that complainants who are dissatisfied with the decision of their own chief go to the Fort, meaning of course the Portuguese military post, or office of the Administrador.

There is no doubt that in former days the responsibility for crime and debt was transferred to a relative in the absence of the delinquent. If a thief escaped, responsibility would rest with a brother, a father or a son. The mother's brother was often held to be responsible for the misdeeds and debts of his sister's children. The mother's brother has rights that extend to the sale of his sister's children to pay his debts. For this reason Ngonga says, "If I have done wrong and they cannot catch me it is right that he (mother's brother) should pay for me."

I supposed the case of Ngonga having stolen a cow; he has been caught but escapes. Ngonga said that the man from whom he had stolen the animal would go to his (Ngonga's) mother's brother in order to name the price required for the cow, or any other possession which had been stolen. If the mother's brother thought the price reasonable he would pay. On the contrary, if the price claimed were too high the mother's brother would appeal, first to the village chief, then if necessary to the king.

Ownership of land does not appear to have been a source of dispute. Apparently land was distributed by the chief as explained in dealing with village organization. Rights seem to have been well defined and there was always enough land for a stranger. When a man was going away on a trading journey he might lend his land to another who would agree to cultivate it and take the produce for a year. I was unable to satisfy myself that land is now, or was in time past held to be the property of dead ancestors. The right to land depends on its use and allotment by a chief at the time of founding a village. A man who intended to be absent would make a payment so that he might leave his goods at the house of another. The chief would settle any disputes arising from these arrangements.

The complainant in a suit is called *esubile*, the defendant is *ovilue*. The name for a witness is *usungi*. In the old days a false witness had to make recompense to the man about whom he had told a lie; he would probably have a beating as well. A master was in every way responsible for the actions of a slave. The degree of responsi-

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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of the men's house, and the headman's loss of status. The new institution of the catechetical school does not revive village solidarity in this form. The contemporary Ovimbundu do not live in a 'village headman society' comparable to those of British Central Africa,[13] since the concept and manifestations of village solidarity around a headman are so notably deficient. Reference may also be made to the economic ethics of the Ovimbundu with their approval of making money and the belief that all loans even within the circle of the elementary family should be repaid, that is, wealth is seen by all as an end in itself rather than a means of obtaining personal loyalties.

In the previous chapter it was shown how the traditional headmanship is no longer a significant legal and political institution. In this chapter I have tried to indicate that it lacks sources of authority and prestige within the village.

The line of argument has involved reference to the contemporary kinship system of which an outline has been given. This will be more fully discussed in later chapters, when a more detailed comparison of present institutions with the traditional kinship system will be made.

[13] For an example of these societies see J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester 1956.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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gramophone in a town rather than at a trader's near his home village. Most of the money paid for purchases at the stores is money raised by selling crops or livestock. Through labour migration there is, however, some transmission of skills; it is easy to find bricklayers and carpenters of a sort even in Gumba.

Money, rather than barter, is the principal means of exchange among the villages in the selling of local products, and even of meat from pigs. Payment for labour service, such as assistance in house-building and in bringing in maize, is made in beer, except among Protestants who substitute a meal. There is also a custom by which a household which finds, probably at the end of the dry season, that it has not enough maize will make beer to exchange on a particular day for maize.

Ties of kinship and friendship have some economic significance. A kinsman will help with house-building without expecting payment; likewise a man who has a cleared field which he does not want to use may sell it for 200 escudos (£2. 10s.) but would give it free to a kinsman. A man may make a charge for lending his bicycle, though this varies with individuals; he certainly would not do so if it were lent to a friend. Loans between kinsmen should be repaid, and a tailor with a sewing-machine will make the same charges to relatives as to non-kinsmen.

There are few occasions for groups to work together. The unit of consumption and production is the domestic family. Even here, the husband, each wife, and the adolescents have their own fields, though a man may help his wife. Such other occasions of mutual help, in clearing a field, which may occur between friends or kinsmen, will only bring a few, often only two of them.

The Ovimbundu I knew were (with exceptions) not avaricious or grasping; thus, beer might be given to people who have not actually worked in house-building parties. It is regarded as a moral duty to pay one's monetary debts as soon as possible. On various occasions I lent money to people who were pressed and I received back all the money lent. Borrowers insisted that borrowings should be written down, and that the paper on which it was written should be given to them when they paid, or destroyed. Making money and being rich are regarded with